

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ORM-02 DHA-02 IO-13 AID-05 CIAE-00
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PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /078 R

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TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T STATE 067781

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SREF, LE, IK, US

SUBJECT: DANY CHAMOUN ON ASSYRIANS AND LEBANESE POLITICS

1. AMERICAN-ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE YONAN AND DANY CHAMOUN REVIEWED WITH US ON MARCH 24 YONAN'S HOPE FOR A LARGE-SCALE TEN-YEAR PROGRAM OF RESETTLEMENT OF IRAQI AND PERHAPS TURKISH ASSYRIANS INTO LEBANON, YONAN IS OF COURSE SEEKING U.S. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR SUCH A RESETTLEMENT EFFORT. WE EXPLAINED CAREFULLY THAT THERE WAS NO PROSPECT OF ANY USG SUPPORT, FINANCIAL OR OF ANOTHER KIND, IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FULL APPROVAL OF THE CENTRAL LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. EVEN ASSUMING THAT THIS OBSTACLE COULD BE OVERCOME BY YONAN, THERE WERE OTHER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS--INCLUDING WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE
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A PATENT STRENGTHENING OF ONE COMMUNAL FACTION WITHIN STATUS OF THE ASSYRIAN COMMUNITIES ELSEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IF THERE WERE A U.S. LABEL ON ANY SUCH PROGRAM--WHICH WOULD CAUSE US GREAT HESITATION. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE U.S. DID OF COURSE HAVE HUMANITARIAN INTEREST IN THE SITUATION OF ASSYRIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WE ADVISED YONAN TO PURSUE HIS IDEAS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

SUCH AS THE UNHCR, WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, ETC.

2. CHAMOUN INTERESTINGLY BETRAYED SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE CONCEPT WHILE ADMITTING CANDIDLY THAT ASSYRIAN RESETTLEMENT WOULD SERVE MARONITE INTERESTS, HE SAID HE WOULD WANT IRAQI ASSYRIANS TO RETAIN THEIR PROPERTY AND THEIR TIES TO IRAQ WHILE USING LEBANON AS A "SECOND HOME." CHAMOUN SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIDED TO DRAPER THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT YONAN WAS NAIVE, AND HE DID NOT EXPECT U.S. POSITION TO BE OTHER THAN WHAT WE OUTLINED.

3. CHAMOUN LATER TALKED TO US ABOUT LEBANON'S SITUATION ALONG LINES FAMILIAR TO EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO SAW HIM JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM LEBANON. HE WILL BE COMING IN, UNACCOMPANIED BY HIS COLLEAGUES, ON MONDAY, MARCH 28, FOR MORE CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSION. CHAMOUN DID SPEAK OF AN IMPENDING CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SARKIS AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN SPARKED OFF BY SARKIS'S DESIRE TO REFORM THE ARMED FORCES. HE FELT THAT SARKIS MAY WELL DECIDE TO RESIGN LATER IN THE YEAR SINCE THE POSITIONS OF SARKIS

AND THE KFUR FRONT WERE SO FAR APART. CHAMOUN SAID A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WAS NECESSARY. NO OUTSIDE MONEY WOULD COME IN UNTIL THIS HAPPENED. THE KFUR FRONT HAS A PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING WHICH THE CHRISTIANS WOULD LIKE TO IMPOSE ON THE MUSLIMS. IT CALLS INTER ALIA FOR A BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE, IN WHICH ONE HOUSE WOULD REPRESENT RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC GROUPS, WHILE THE OTHER WOULD CONTAIN BALANCED REPRESENTATION
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FROM FOUR LEBANESE CANTONS OR PROVINCES. IN THE ABSENCE OF POLITICAL PROGRESS HE PREDICTED THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD BE PARTITIONED.

4. WHEN ASKED ABOUT MARONITE OBJECTIVES IN SOUTH LEBANON, HE SAID ONLY THAT THEY HAD ORIGINALLY HOPED TO LINK A BORDER BUFFER ZONE IN THE SOUTH WITH JAZZIN BUT THAT THE MOVEMENT OF THE SYRIAN ADF UNITS INTO THAT AREA HAD PREVENTED THE MARONITES FROM DEVELOPING THIS STRATEGY. HE SPOKE FREELY ABOUT MARONITE DEPENDENCE UPON ISRAELI SUPPORT AND ADDED THAT A FUTURE "CHRISTIAN LEBANON" INTENDED TO HAVE THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE TIES WITH ISRAEL.

5. ADDED DETAILS WILL BE INCORPORATED WITH REPORTS OF MONDAY MEETINGS.
CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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